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ABSTRACT

Techniques for combining a communicative approach to second language teaching with assessment and use of Internet resources are presented. Emphasis is on beginning and intermediate language instruction. Two levels of student assessment projects designed for a unit on community and neighborhood are presented. The novice project involves exploration of the immediate community; dual intermediate projects include designing a new community and describing a major world organization. An additional exercise on food and meal-taking in a target-language country, with follow-up exercises, is designed to use Internet resources. (MSE)

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FACILITATING PROFICIENCY, AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT, THE INTERNET AND STUDENT ACTIVITIES

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National Standards, proficiency exams, proficiency-driven classes, authentic assessment, inclusion, multiple intelligences, technology, together with a maze of other materials can easily overwhelm today's world language teacher who needs a road map to maneuver between these increasing pedagogical demands and the realities of the classroom, while maintaining time for a personal life.

We would like to offer strategies for such a road map, as we ourselves are second language teachers, involved in these same issues, and who have been sharing our pedagogical techniques with colleagues since 1989.

First of all, there is no need to panic: many of these demands we face are not mutually exclusive and many can be accomplished concurrently. In addition, for years, most of us have been teaching units and using techniques which fit very well under the umbrella of current language buzz words.

Having said this, let's proceed to demystify today's pedagogy and focus on "teacher friendly" strategies which bring about students' language proficiency. In our teaching experience, the topical, communicative, proficiency-driven class successfully results in meaningful learning by the greatest number of students in our mainstreamed classes. We recommend high interest, real-life materials designed for an optimum pace which enables curriculum to be accomplished in the allotted time. To this end, we have created books and tapes, both teacher and student materials, which can be used alone or in conjunction with other textbook series. Additionally, to insure more positive results for all our students, it is essential that the format of state assessment tools, figure among the formats used in assessing language progress throughout the school year. Cognizant of this, we have created such assessment programs for both novice and intermediate courses.

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Authentic assessment projects also have a valid place in today's classroom, given their potential to increase motivation, to develop critical thinking, to stimulate learning and to foster creativity. They also provide a stage upon which the students' multiple intelligences may be validated and celebrated. Over the long term, a comparison of projects, can be a means to evaluate a given student's progress. The following two assessment projects for the topic of Community and Neighborhood, one for novice, the other for intermediate provide examples of spiraling assessment:

COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD

SITUATION: Your town is having a weekend festival. The committee has asked the community to supply information about the town that will acquaint new residents with its many aspects and points of interest.

1. Make a **list** of 5 of the most interesting places in your neighborhood.

2. Make a **map** indicating, stores, schools and public buildings. Label it in the language you are studying.

3. Write a **note** to the social events editor of your local newspaper telling about the upcoming summer festival.

4. Make an **audio tape** for the chamber of commerce in which you describe the activities in which visitors can participate in your town.

5. Make a **video tape** of your neighborhood. Tell why it is a nice place to live. Ex. I like _____ because my friends live here.

6. Make a **commercial** in which you describe the best aspects of your town.

7. Make a **poster** advertising the festival.

8. **CULTURE**: Most towns or cities have unusual buildings that set them apart from any other place. Investigate several cities or towns in a country you are studying and find out which buildings or monuments are famous or unique. Write the information you learn in a short report. Explain to the class what you have learned.

Portfolio Assessment Tasks for the Beginning Level, Lennon and Moore, (1995) p. 19.

AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT
LE VOISINAGE, LA COMMUNAUTE ET LES SERVICES PUBLICS

PROJECT A: DESIGN A NEW COMMUNITY

You have been hired by the government to be a member of a team that is creating a new community. In order to create an interesting, well-designed community, you must accomplish the following:

1. Write a description of the advantages of living there and create a map of the community (i.e., recreation areas, shops, public transportation, etc.).

2. Make a video commercial in which you explain what your community offers and the reasons someone should move there. Explain also why this community is unique.

3. Make a brochure of your community. Give the community a name and explain about five places of special interest (i.e., museums, hiking trails, theaters, etc.) that would appeal to tourists visiting your community. Describe what each place offers, how it can be reached (i.e., mode of transportation, directions) and where it is located (i.e., near, next to, across from, etc.). Include landmarks.

PROJECT B: DESCRIBE A MAJOR WORLD ORGANIZATION

There are many organizations in the world that try to improve the human condition. choose one of these world organizations and write an essay in French, including all of the following information:

1. What were the historical reasons for the founding of the organization?

2. Who were the leaders who founded the organization?

3. What was the purpose of the organization?

4. Describe both the successes and failures of the organization.

5. What would you suggest to improve the endeavors of the organization in the twenty-first century.

Authentic Assessment for the Intermediate Level in French, Haigh, Boyce, Gentile, Pulver, Rubin and Terry, (1995), p. 79

Keeping up with computer technology and offerings can become almost a full-time job in itself for the language teacher, and yet, they are strong motivational tools providing almost endless pedagogical possibilities. To assist colleagues, we have published a topical Internet book of student activities, supported by our web site which contains appropriate links world-wide for French, German, Italian, Spanish, and ESL. No technical knowledge of computers or Internet is required. For classes that do not have access to a computer lab, browsing can be simulated by using color overhead transparencies. These can be produced by any individual with Internet access and a color ink jet printer. To demonstrate the range of activities possible using the Internet, below is a sample of the "Food and Meal Taking Topic" from Internet Tasks for Second Language Students by Cohn, Moore, Taliercio-Cohn. (1998), p. 23 - 24. Website link: http://www.proficiencypress.com

Worksheet

FOOD AND MEAL TAKING

SITUATION:

You are looking for a place to eat in a major city where the language you are studying is spoken. Locate at least two restaurants on the World Wide Web. Choose one and record the following information:

1. Write the name of the restaurant and its location.

_____

2. What is the specialty of the house?

_____

3. List the different headings on the menu.

_____

_____

4. Choose the dishes that you think you would like to eat for each course. Write them as they appear on the menu and also translate the name or description of each dish.

_____

_____

5. List five food items that you have never eaten or do not recognize.

_____

6. Include any other interesting information that you found.

_____

_____

Follow-Up Activities
FOOD AND MEAL TAKING

Speaking/Reading Activities:

1. Convince your partner to have a meal at the restaurant that you chose on the World Wide Web.

2. Print a menu from the Web and use it to role-play a restaurant scene with a group of your classmates. Take turns playing the part of the waiter.

Web Design Activities:

1. Design a web page to serve as a directory of your favorite restaurants for tourists who will be visiting your area.

2. Choose some typical dishes from the restaurant web sites that you visited and find recipes for them on the Internet or at the library. Use those recipes to design a web page dedicated to regional cooking.

Keypal/Penpal Activities:

1. Write to your keypal or penpal and exchange weekly shopping lists from your families' households and compare them.

2. Write to your keypal or penpal and exchange recipes for some of your favorite dishes or desserts. Include photos if possible.

Cultural Activity:

Find recipes or references to foods that are prepared for holidays or other special occasions. You may use the Internet and/or other resources.

The expression "work smarter, not harder", increasingly takes on new meaning for world language teachers as our roles as professionals are re-defined by pedagogical studies and visions, as well as technological resources and national and state guidelines. In order to advance as language teachers, we must take stock of our available resources, seek out colleagues' successful strategies, experiment, explore, and learn by evaluating our results. The much hoped for, dual-fold outcomes are students who can effectively communicate in a target language, plus fulfilled teachers who are able to find time for personal pursuits.